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RHMFIUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL//CCJ2/HSE/CCJ5//
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SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN TO SEND ECONOMY AND FINANCE MINISTER TO
U.S.-CENTRAL ASIA TIFA MEETING

Ref: (A) SECSTATE 78616, (B) Ashgabat 0171, (C) Ashgabat 0554

Summary

1. The Government of Turkmenistan officially confirmed that it would send its Minister of Economy and Finance, Hojamyrat Geldimyradov, to participate in the upcoming U.S.-Central Asian Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) Council meeting, to be held July 17-19 in Washington D.C. Bio and recommended meetings contained paras 3-4 and 5, respectively. Embassy sees Geldimyradov's visit as an excellent opportunity to follow up on our strategy of turning the page in our relationship. Geldimyradov has met with the EUR/ACE Assistance delegation (ref B) and most recently with the PDAS Mann Energy delegation, where USG encouraged him to improve Turkmenistan's foreign investment climate. End summary.

Geldimyradov to Attend TIFA

2. (SBU) On June 8 Post forwarded a formal invitation to the Government of Turkmenistan to participate in the third U.S.-Central Asian TIFA Council meeting and related events that will take place on July 17 through July 19 in Washington, DC. On June 15 the Government of Turkmenistan responded that it would send its Economy and Finance Minister, Hojamyrat Geldimyradov, to participate in the meeting. Deputy Chairman for Foreign Affairs Rashit Meredov confirmed to Charge on June 18 that Turkmenistan's Economy and Finance Minister was the designated TIFA point of contact.

Bio of Hojamyrat Geldimyradov

3. (SBU) Hojamyrat Geldimyradov has served as Minister of Economy and Finance since June 2005, when President Niyazov appointed him, describing him as "quiet and hard-working." In February 2006, Geldimyradov was assigned the additional responsibility of National Coordinator for International Technical Assistance. In February 2007, newly-inaugurated President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov re-appointed Geldimyradov Economy and Finance Minister. On March 27, he was additionally appointed the European Union International Technical Assistance (EU-TACIS) National Coordinator.

¶4. (SBU) Prior to his 2005 appointment, Geldimyradov held several positions in district, regional and national tax departments. A native of the Ahal region, Geldimyradov completed his university level studies in Turkmenistan. His early professional experience consisted of a series of tax service management positions starting in the Baharly Regional office (1990-1997), then to the Ahal Region State Tax Service (1997-2004) and finally working as the Department Head for the national Main State Tax Service (2004-2005). Geldimyradov speaks Turkmen and accented Russian. He speaks no English.

Suggested Meetings

¶5. (U) Geldimyradov's visit comes on the eve of planned departure of the USG Economic Reform Delegation and represents an excellent opportunity for Geldimyradov to be exposed to the financial and banking mechanisms USG and EU have been encouraging him to implement. Embassy, therefore, suggests Geldimyradov's visit by augmented by bilateral USG meetings to include, pending their availability:

-- USAID Deputy Assistant Administrator/Europe & Eurasia Bureau, Drew Luten;

-- Representatives of BearingPoint, the contractor for USAID's Economic Policy Reform project;

-- Vice President Marsteller, U.S. EXIM Bank;

-- John Breidenstine, Regional Director for OIO/Europe, U.S. Commercial Service, Department of Commerce;

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-- U.S. Trade and Development Agency (USTDA) Regional Director Dan Stein.

If there is time, post would also suggest a meeting with appropriate State Department WTO official in order to expose Minister Geldimyradov to international -- and WTO -- standards. Embassy welcomes additional suggestions to make the most out of Geldimyradov's visit.

Comment

¶6. (SBU) As the USG continues to pursue its strategy of turning a page in our relationship following the death of President Niyazov in December 2006, the primary focus has been on sending USG delegations to Turkmenistan. Post understands the need to augment that strategy with getting Government of Turkmenistan officials to the United States. Geldimyradov's trip represents the first opportunity to get a Berdimuhammedov administration ministerial-level visitor to the United States. Though Geldimyradov is hardly the most dynamic member of the new administration, his position and ministry carry considerable responsibility for any meaningful economic reform. End Comment.

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